

Message Text

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72

ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 IO-14 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10

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R 111725Z JUL 74

FM AMEMBASSY BONN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3747

INFO AMCONSUL BREMEN

AMCONSUL DUSSELDORF

AMCONSUL FRANKFURT

AMCONSUL HAMBURG

AMCONSUL MUNICH

AMCONSUL STUTTGART

USMISSION BERLIN

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, GW

SUBJECT: BAHR MINISTERIAL APPOINTMENT

REF: BONN 10815

1. CHANCELLOR SCHMIDT'S UNEXPECTED DECISION TO REPLACE THE YOUNG, AMBITIOUS ERHARD EPPLER, MINISTER FOR DEVELOPMENT AID, BY EGON BAHR, IS GENERALLY INTERPRETED IN BONN AS A SHREWD MOVE IN INTRA-SPD AFFAIRS AS WELL AS IN A FOREIGN POLICY SENSE. SPD CONTACTS SAY THAT BAHR'S APPOINTMENT SERVES TO REDUCE THE CHANCES OF CONFLICT WITHIN THE PARTY BETWEEN THE SCHMIDT CAMP AND PRO-BRANDT ELEMENTS. THERE IS CLEARLY GOOD SENSE FROM THE CHANCELLOR'S POINT OF VIEW IN TRYING TO DEFUSE TENSIONS THAT FOLLOWED IN THE WAKE OF BRANDT'S RESIGNATION, AND

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BAHR'S APPOINTMENT IS SEEN AS BEING INTENDED TO CONVEY

CONTINUITY IN THE TRANSITION BETWEEN THE BRANDT AND SCHMIDT REGIMES. BAHR'S APPOINTMENT MAY ALSO SERVE TO EASE PERSONAL RELATIONS BETWEEN SCHMIDT AND BRANDT.

2. SCHMIDT'S APPOINTMENT OF BAHR IS DOUBLY SHREWD IN THAT IT DRAWS THE MOST INTELLIGENT AND RESOURCEFUL MEMBER OF THE BRANDT CIRCLE ON TO SCHMIDT'S TEAM. NO ONE HAS EVER QUESTIONED BAHR'S TALENTS, EVEN IF THEY HAVE TAKEN ISSUE WITH HIS POLICY CONCEPTS AND OBJECTED TO HIS SOMEWHAT DEVIOUS STYLE. IT IS A CONSIDERABLE ACHIEVEMENT FOR SCHMIDT TO HAVE HARNESSSED BAHR'S ABILITIES TO THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT MACHINE.

3. THE FOREIGN POLICY ASPECT IS TWO-FOLD. FIRST, THE RETENTION IN HIGH OFFICE OF BAHR, THE ARCHITECT OF OSTPOLITIK, SEEMS DESIGNED TO REASSURE THE RUSSIANS AND THE EAST EUROPEANS THAT THE SCHMIDT GOVERNMENT DOES NOT INTEND TO TURN ITS BACK ON BRANDT'S EASTERN POLICY APPROACHES. IT IS TRUE THAT BAHR'S NEW FUNCTIONS DO NOT PLACE HIM AS CENTRALLY IN THE FRG-EASTERN PICTURE AS DID HIS POSITION UNDER BRANDT, BUT PRESUMABLY HIS ADVICE WILL BE SOUGHT AND HIS INFLUENCE COUNT FOR SOMETHING IN THE FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF GERMAN EASTERN POLICY. SECOND, THE APPOINTMENT OF A MAN OF BAHR'S REPUTATION TO DEVELOPMENT AID MAY REASSURE DEVELOPING COUNTRIES THAT EPPLER'S RESIGNATION DOES NOT MEAN ANY LESSENING OF THE GERMAN COMMITMENT TO ECONOMIC AID.

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